

FORWARD, ARCH!

BRIBE AND GROOM

Grand Army Plaza monument open to visitors after rehab

BY COLIN MIXSON

It's an arch revival!

Kings County sightseers can once again behold Prospect Park from above as soon as workers finish restoring the observation deck atop the Soldiers' and Sailors' Arch as part of a nearly \$9-million renovation of Grand Army Plaza, according to keepers of Brooklyn's Backyard.

"On special occasions the observation deck will be opened to the public once the arch is restored," said Deborah Kirschner, a spokeswoman for meadow steward the Prospect Park Alliance, which maintains the lawn in conjunction with the city.

Mayor DeBlasio on Friday announced the city will dedicate \$8.9 million to the Alliance-led rehabilitation, which will include replacing the 125-year-old Civil War memorial's rooftop observation deck and iron staircases leading to it from within the ancient monument.

The project also calls for repairing the arch's stonework,

Continued on page 14



WHISKERING CAMPAIGN: The hosts of the Coney Island Beard and Moustache Competition, Adam RealMan, left, and Handsome Dick Manitoba, right, stand with one of last year's winners.

Eliza Rinn

Growth, gifts are key to beard win

BY JULIANNE MCSHANE

These contestants are in the cross hairs!

Shaggy locals will comb together in Coney Island to determine who has the finest facial hair, at the 11th annual Coney Island Beard and Moustache Competition. The host and producer of the event said that the judges will pluck 13 whisker winners from the nearly 100 entrants based mostly on the quality of their chin coiffure — but that gifts of booze, cigars, and other treats may sway their opinions.

"They're looking for thickness, style, look, presentation," said Adam Rinn, who also swallows swords at the Coney Island sideshow under the name Adam RealMan. "And of course, being Coney Island, they're also looking for bribes. We encourage bribery in this event."

The competition's top prize — the Beard and Moustache Fez trophy — has been bestowed upon deserving beard-bearers since 2008, but the contest has added several new categories over the years, in-

Continued on page 6

City scales back Ridge scrap pickup

BY BEN VERDE

It's a choice between junk or skunk.

The city has to leave food scraps to rot in the Ridge for a whole week in order to do more bulk pickup, Depart-

ment of Sanitation reps told a meeting of Community Board 10 on Aug. 22, explaining that New York's Strongest needed to cut back organics collection

Continued on page 14



Photo by Stefano Giovannini

AW, SHUCKS!: Williamsburg oyster bar Maison Premiere will return to the Taste Williamsburg Greenpoint fest.

Unlimited tastes at food fest

BY BILL ROUNDY

Fill 'er up!

This year's installment of the Taste Williamsburg Greenpoint food festival on Sept. 16 will offer something new — all you can eat!

During its first eight incarnations, the tribute to the restaurants and bars

of the northern neighborhoods used a ticket system, which visitors exchanged for samples. But this year foodies can get unlimited tastes — a change that simplifies the process and helps the environment, said the event's organizer.

"Taste is committed to eliminating as much waste

as possible and doing everything we can to be a zero-waste event, hence moving away from printed ticket booklet format," said Dana Krieger,

This year the festival will feature more than 40 vendors, including beloved fried chicken spot Pies 'n'

Continued on page 6

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THIN ICE: The city has signed off on demolishing Coney Island’s venerable Abe Stark Sports Center to make way for a new facility, but officials got an earful from locals worried about plans to bring in a private developer.
Photo by Steve Solomonson

Arena anger

Coney Islanders demand beloved ice rink remain under Parks Department control

BY BEN VERDE

The city is on thin ice with Coney Islanders, who are demanding that the Abe Stark Sports Center be kept under the Department of Parks and Recreation’s control if it is demolished and redeveloped under a 2009 rezoning of the area.

There are no plans on the drawing board yet, but the city — which has already signed off on the demolition of the beloved ice rink — is considering whether or not to bring in a private builder to redevelop it, which locals fear would make the new facility less accessible to the community, comparing it to the Aviator Sports Center, sitting on Federal park land at Floyd Bennett Field.

“When you say ‘private developer,’ I’m thinking about something like Aviator — which is expensive,” said Ida Sanoff. “If you have parkland, let the Parks Department handle it.”

Other locals echoed those concerns at a community meeting on Aug. 21 hosted by the Economic Development Corporation,

which is leading the redevelopment.

“It can not go private,” said Matt David. “It’s got to be run by Parks.”

Therdevelopmentofthe facility on the Riegelmann Boardwalk between W. 19th and W. 20th streets is part of the city’s plan to expand the amusement district along the Boardwalk, a major element of which will bring new rides and attractions to five parcels of land between W. 10th and W. 16th streets.

But some locals said the city could develop the area without even demolishing the Abe Stark center, which occupies only a small portion of the lot between Surf Avenue and the Boardwalk next to MCU Park, which is mostly used for parking. One Coney Island father said he doesn’t want the city to refurbish the center at all, because he relies on it to keep his kids out of trouble.

“I pay a lot of money and work many hours to have my kids off the street, and Abe Stark is helping me do that,” Ignazio Venezia said to applause at the

meeting. “To have you tearing down this facility, you’re going to destroy my kids’ future.”

Representatives for the development agency had little to say to ease residents’ fears, with the city’s plans still in the early stages, but they assured locals that the city would have a strong role in the development of the new center, even if it is handed over to a private builder.

“I want to be clear that the city maintains a strong arm and a strong role in this project,” said Wil Fisher, a senior project manager at the economic agency. “We want a project that works for everybody.”

Councilman Mark Treyger (D-Coney Island) echoed his constituents’ worries that a privately developed center would become unaffordable for residents, and argued that the city can afford to handle the project itself.

“The city has a \$4-billion surplus,” Treyger said. “This should be a public facility on public land.”

Treyger also com-
Continued on page 12

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MAYOR SITS DOWN WITH CNG

The mayor invited Community News Group staffers to discuss issues across Brooklyn at an Aug. 23 roundtable discussion that touched on local transit projects, transparency in his administration, and traffic-related deaths that continue to stymie his Vision Zero initiative for safer streets. Read on for our reports on what Hizzoner had to say:

BQX likely to derail without cash from Trump, Congress

BY JULIANNE CUBA

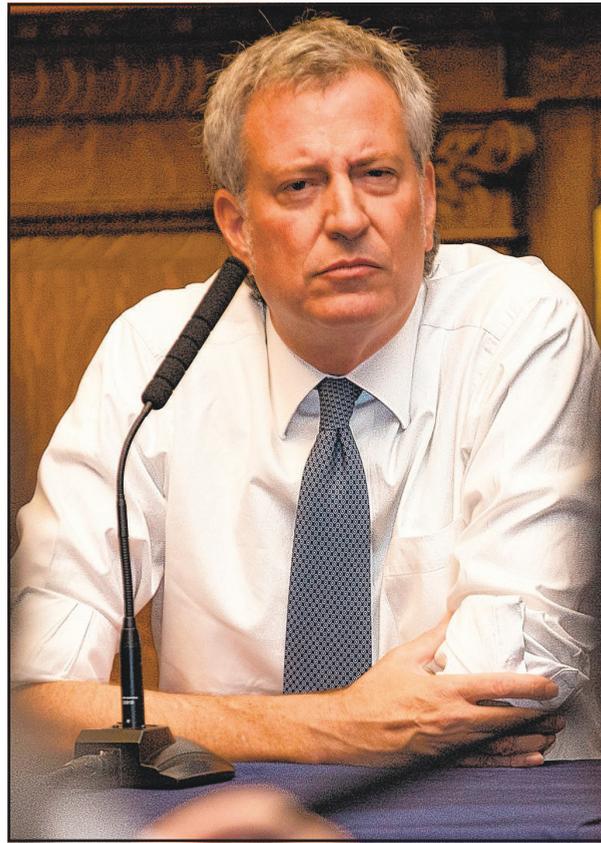
Mayor DeBlasio put the fate of his pet \$2.5-billion waterfront trolley connecting Sunset Park and Queens in the hands of his frequent sparring partner President Trump, doubling down on a need for federal funding for the scheme after first claiming the transit system would pay for itself via tax revenue generated by a surge of development along its 14-mile track.

“I don’t think it’s doable without federal support,” DeBlasio said during last Thursday’s sit-down with local media. “We believe there will be some real funding created by its

presence, but we’re going to need some additional support.”

Hizzoner — who has publicly called for investigations into sexual harassment claims against the president and criticized his crackdown on immigrant families attempting to cross the southern border — said the commander in chief and Congress must fork over cash for his proposed Brooklyn Queens Connector streetcar in their next budget, and that until they do, the scheme’s coffers are empty.

“Only thing I can tell you now is federal,” he said. “And that’s something that would have to



GOING LOCAL: Mayor DeBlasio pondered a response to one of the many questions our reporters lobbed at him during his sit-down with Brooklym media on Aug. 23. Photo by Trey Pentecost

come in the upcoming federal budget. The good news is we have seen the beginning of some spending on infrastructure in the last budget reconciliation.”

DeBlasio’s admission came days after Trump blasted him on social media for allegedly plagiariz-

ing number 45’s campaign motto “Promises made, promises kept” — the president’s latest critique of the city’s top pol, whom he previously called “probably the worst mayor in the history of New York City.”

“Bill DeBlasio ... just
Continued on page 10

L closure minor nuisance compared to BQE repairs

BY JULIANNE CUBA

The worst is yet to come!

Locals dreading delays when the L train’s Brooklyn–Manhattan tunnel shuts for 15 months next April can expect an even more-hellish commute when the city kicks off its repairs to the Brooklyn–Queens Expressway’s crumbling triple cantilever, according to Mayor DeBlasio.

“The L train shutdown is taking a piece of mass transit offline for a very-limited piece of its run,” Hizzoner said. “The BQE is taking a crucial highway out of the equation that also is a truck route. That is a more-complex reality.”

Work to rehabilitate the three-tiered 1.5-mile stretch of expressway from Atlantic Avenue to Sands Street can now start as early as 2021 — months after full L-train service is supposed to resume — and wrap by 2026, after state lawmakers in April passed a budget authorizing use of the streamlined design-build process for the city-led job, which will allow the Department of Transportation to solicit one bid for both the design and construction phases of the project, instead of contracting separate firms for each.

Green-lighting design-build, which proponents say will also shave about \$100 million from the repair’s total \$1.9-billion price tag, means the repairs will likely finish before 2028 — the year local transit leaders warned they might have to force the roughly 16,000 trucks that travel the expressway daily down local streets instead so the triple cantilever doesn’t collapse beneath their weight.

And residents shouldn’t worry about the decrepit, nearly 70-year-



CRUMBLING: The triple cantilever.

File photo by Jason Speakman

old roadway crumbling before then — even if they’ve read reports of other bridges around the world spontaneously collapsing — because the city’s top priority is making sure its infrastructure is safe, the mayor said.

“I think the city over the decades has a very-good record of staying on top of our highways and our bridges in terms of their structural reality,” he said. “A lot of work has been done to keep it going on the way to a much bigger solution.”

Even with the speed-up process, however, rebuilding part of a major roadway that connects Brooklyn with the outer boroughs will not be without its headaches, and locals should prepare for them, according to DeBlasio, who implored the reporters in the room not to blow up the situation in the way he said they catastrophized other necessary infrastructure projects, such as dubbing the L-train closure the “L-pocalypse.”

“There’s going to be disruption anytime you have to do something big,” he said. “I know you need your clicks guys, but I just think it creates this atmosphere of alarm, and then people deal with it.”

But unlike said L-pocalypse — for which, city and state transportation officials are rolling out a plan to aid the roughly 225,000 L-train
Continued on page 14

Bklyn Weekly Editor: Transparency matters

BY VINCE DIMICELI

Normally, stories in this newspaper don’t need a jumping off point, because the news is the jumping point.

But this story is a little different.

For the last few years, reporters from across the city have had a tough time using the names of the spokesmen and women they talk to at the many municipal agencies they deal with daily.

Here’s how it used to work: A reporter calls an agency such as the

Department of Buildings or the Department of Transportation and asks questions, and the spokesperson, within a reasonable amount of time, provides answers from a named person representing the agency addressing the issue.

And that was that.

But things recently began to change. Out of nowhere, those agency workers, whose jobs it is to disseminate information, started asking to leave their names off the quotes they gave us, preferring we cite

“a spokesperson” as the source.

This may seem to be a minor point in a larger game of inside baseball, but in fact, it isn’t. Quoting an “agency spokesperson” instead of a real, live human being removes accountability. If we are not naming names, what is to stop a spokesperson from lying?

So when Mayor DeBlasio sat down with local media, I asked him if he had anything to do with this policy.

“It’s not coming from

me, I can tell you that,” he said.

And DeBlasio quickly agreed this was a problem that needs solving.

“On the official responses, I think it makes a lot of sense to have a name attributed, so we will make sure that is the case. I want to fix that,” he said. “My name is attributed, as should that of anyone else speaking as a spokesperson.”

Score one for transparency.

Vince DiMiceli is the editor-in-chief of Brooklyn Weekly.

CHUTES AND LADDERS HEADED TO CONEY ISLAND

Amusement area to get new log flume, zip-line park, and food plazas as Luna Park expands

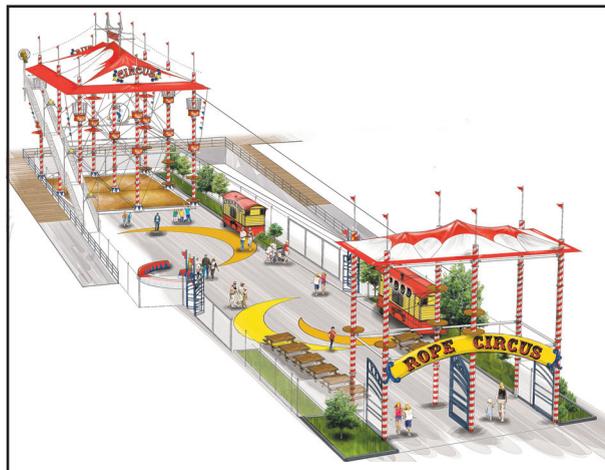
BY KEVIN DUGGAN

Get ready to be water-logged!

The People's Playground is set to get a host of new attractions, including a new log-flume water ride, a zip-line adventure park, and a public plaza with eateries and arcade games.

The new attractions will help boost the Coney Island economy and add momentum to the city's investments in affordable housing in the neighborhood, according to the head of the city's Economic Development Corporation, which launched the initiative together with the Department of Parks and Recreation.

"Coney Island is both a cherished summertime destination and an important economic engine for Southern Brooklyn," said James Patchett. "With these exciting new attractions, and our ongoing in-



SPLASHING OUT: (Above) The new adventure park will feature a zip-line course where visitors can enjoy views of the Boardwalk and ocean. (Right) The new flume water ride will be a refreshing addition to Coney Island's array of iconic rides.



NYCEDC

vestments in housing and infrastructure, Coney Island's future has never looked brighter."

The New Jersey-based amusement park developer-operator Central Amusement International will build the water ride on the empty lot in between the Thunderbolt roller

coaster and MCU Park, while the zip-line park will take over a stretch of what is now W. 15th Street between the coaster and the Coney Island Raceway.

Boardwalkers will also be able to rest in the shade and enjoy some choice games and grub at a new pedestrian-only public

plaza at the end of Ruby Jacobs Walk, which will feature an open-air food court and an entertainment area with an arcade and other games, according to the city. The last 300 feet of W. 12th Street will also be converted to a pedestrian plaza, with greenery and seating.

In 2017, the Economic Development Corporation and the Parks Department requested proposals to develop city property the size of more than two and a half football fields spread across five parcels of land between Surf Avenue and the Boardwalk, between W. 10th and W.

16th streets.

If all goes as planned, the zip-line attraction should be ready to open next summer, and the log flume is scheduled to open a year later, according to the city.

Council recently designated the 95-year-old Riegelmann Boardwalk as a scenic landmark, and the local councilman said that the new attractions abutting the wooden walkway will help reinvigorate the area's storied past and stimulate future development of the amusement district.

"Recapturing the best of Coney Island's past is a big part of the future at the People's Playground," said councilman Mark Treyger (D-Coney Island). "This continues the revitalization of the amusement district, offering exciting new activities and attractions for residents and visitors alike to enjoy."

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TOE THE 'LINE'

'A Chorus Line' launches new season at Gallery Players

BY BILL ROUNDY

Get ready for a singular sensation, with every little step they take!

The Gallery Players will launch its 42nd season with a visit to Broadway, in the show biz musical "A Chorus Line," opening on Sept. 8. The toe-tapping show, about a group of 17 dancers auditioning for eight roles in a Broadway musical, is beloved by musical theater people—and by this production's director, who described himself as "a fanatic" for the show.

"It's about people who are pursuing their dreams for the arts, and the sacrifices and the incredible dedication that takes. That's why I love it, and so many theater people love it — it expresses what our lives are like," said Tom Rowan.

The director and author literally wrote the book about the popular musical: "A Chorus Line FAQ: All That's Left to Know About Broadway's Singular Sensation." He brings a wealth of knowledge the musical, which debuted Off-Broadway in 1975. Rowan says that despite its age, the musical's content is still up-to-date.

"It really doesn't feel



HAT TRICK: Dancers rehearse the demanding choreography for "A Chorus Line," opening at Gallery Players in Park Slope on Sept. 8.

Photo by Stefano Giovannini

dated at all, even 43 years later," he said. "Dancers still really relate to it — it's still what they go through at auditions, and it has a classic, timeless music to it. It still feels vital and current."

Another factor that keeps it fresh is the complicated dance steps, which Rowan describes as "the backbone of the show."

The story of "A Chorus Line" was built from interviews with Broadway dancers, as they discussed

their childhoods, their auditions, and their love of dancing, and the choreography was created alongside those interviews, said Rowan, often before the music was written.

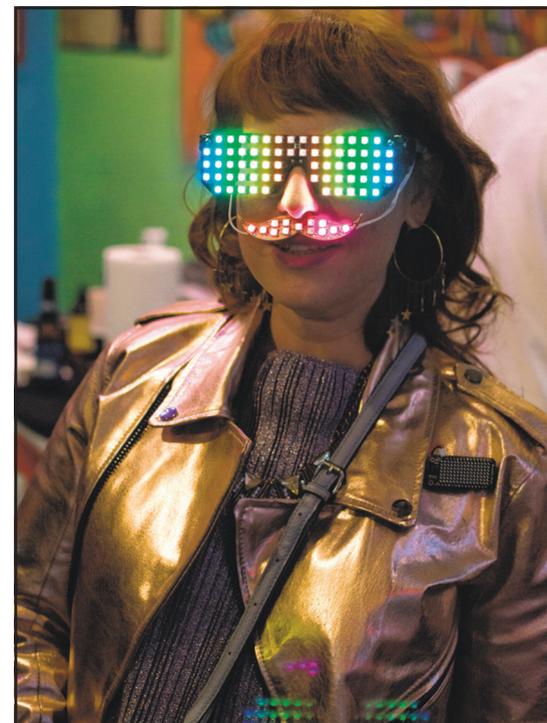
This production has a secret weapon to help those steps come to life: choreographer Eddie Gutierrez, who studied with many of the original cast members and producers. His insight has been invaluable for the actors, said Rowan.

"He brings so much knowledge of the steps, but also the original artistic impulse behind it, so they're getting a really authentic introduction to what the dance in the show is all about," said Rowan.

Bringing a big Broadway show into the intimate confines of the Gallery Players has its challenges, said Rowan—especially for Gutierrez, who must fit 19 people doing a step, kick, leap onto an Off-Off-Broadway stage—but it will heighten the experience for the audience.

"A big part of the appeal of the show is that the audience feels like they're invisible spectators at a Broadway audition, and in a space like this, where you're so close to the action, you can really see the actors sweat," he said. "It's a much more intense experience. You really feel like you're in the room in a really personal way."

"A Chorus Line" at Gallery Players [199 14th St. between Fourth and Fifth avenues in Park Slope, (212) 352-3101 www.galleryplayers.com]. Sept. 8-30. Thu-Sat at 8 pm; Sun at 3 pm. \$30 (\$20 seniors and kids).



LIGHT UP MY LIP: The Beard and Moustache Competition also has a category titled Hokum and Hoodwinked, for fake beards and soup strainers.

Photo by Eliza Rinn

BEARD

Continued from page 1

cluding the Brass Ring, the Coney Island Curl, for best styled moustache; and Carny Trash, for the worst in show. Rinn said some committed contestants are tearing their hair out to win the latter category.

"Most contestants really do take pride in their facial hair, but every so often you've got someone that's just going to purposely mess it up just to get that award," he said. "Poorly groomed, shaped, dyed — there's lots of horrific stuff we've seen."

Winners will take home professional photographs of Coney Island taken by Rinn's daughter Eliza, along with plaques, gift bags with merchandise from the Coney Island Brewery, and tickets to De-

no's Wonder Wheel and Eldorado bumper cars.

And everyone at the moustache match will leave with some new friends, according to Rinn. In recent years, the competition has been infused with a spirit of camaraderie as "beard club" members come to the contest to mingle with like minds.

"When it started you didn't have as many beard clubs that were coming out as groups — you had individuals coming out," he said. "Now you've got a lot of people who hang out together in these beard clubs. They spend a couple of nights a month hanging out and talking about beards."

Coney Island Beard and Moustache Competition at Sideshows by the Seashore (1208 Surf Ave. at W. 12th Street in Coney Island, www.coneyisland.com). Sept. 8 at 8 pm. \$25.

TASTE

Continued from page 1

Thighs, oyster bar Maison Premiere, the Brooklyn Brewery, and chef Wylie Dufresne's Du's Donuts, among many others. Newcomers to the fest this year include

beer hall Clinton Hall, and the bars The Springs and Brooklyn Label.

Neighborhood residents can also stop by a tent about travel alternatives to the subway, titled "No L? No Problem," featuring reps from various ride-hailing and car

rental services offering suggestions for how to get around during the upcoming L-pocalypse next April (and the many weekend shutdowns happening before then).

The food fest will raise cash to complete the Firehouse North Brooklyn

Community Center, set to open in a former firehouse on Wythe Avenue.

Taste of Williamsburg Greenpoint at East River State Park (90 Kent Ave. at N. Seventh street in Williamsburg, www.tastewg.com). Sept. 16; 1-5 pm. \$55 (\$85 VIP).



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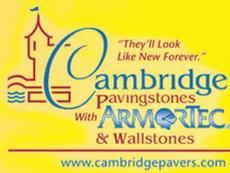
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Camera comeback

Speed cameras to resume issuing tickets after deal reached between Council and governor

BY JULIANNE MCSHANE

Speeding drivers better get ready for their close up.

The city's 140 school-zone speed cameras will resume issuing tickets the day before more than 1.1-million schoolchildren return to classes on Sept. 5, thanks to a Council-brokered deal between Mayor DeBlasio and Gov. Cuomo.

A Park Slope mom who lost her son to a reckless driver five years ago and has led the charge calling for the cameras to be turned back on said she was grateful that Cuomo supported the solution after the Republican-led state Senate failed to vote to pass a bill to turn the cameras back on.

"After your child dies,

it's hard to ever be grateful," said Amy Cohen, whose 12-year-old son, Sammy Cohen Eckstein, was killed on Prospect Park West in 2013. "But today we had a measure of gratitude for [Cuomo's] willingness to explore a creative solution."

Cuomo took the first step to turn the cameras back on by declaring a state of emergency before the city's school year begins, and signing an executive order on Aug. 27 reinstating the state law and granting the city access to state Department of Motor Vehicle records so that it can resume sending tickets to the owners of cars that the cameras catch speeding. The Council was set to introduce

and vote on legislation to reinstate the program in an emergency meeting on Aug. 29, and Mayor DeBlasio plans to sign it into law on Sept. 4.

Council Speaker Corey Johnson told the New York Daily News, which first reported news of the deal on Aug. 26, that the new bill "allows for the expansion of the program," but the Council press office did not respond to a follow-up inquiry by press time about how and when the bill could add more cameras.

Cuomo said the temporary fix does not absolve the state Senate from the responsibility to pass a bill preserving and expanding the program, since executive orders are only valid

for 30 days and he'll have to re-sign it each month.

"This is not a substitute for the state legislature coming back and passing the law," Cuomo said. "We still need the Senate to act responsibly and come back and pass a permanent law so we don't have to do this 30-days-by-30-days interim situation."

The state Senate ended its session on June 20 without voting on a bipartisan bill that would reauthorize the speed cameras and double their number citywide over the next five years after state Sen. Simcha Felder (D-Midwood) — who caucuses with Senate Republicans in the majority — did not allow it to leave the Cities Committee,



RELIEVED: Park Slope mom and speed-cam booster Amy Cohen cheered the deal to turn the cameras back on.

File photo by Trey Pentecost

which he chairs. As a result, the city's 140 cameras — present in six percent of the city's 2,300 school zones — stopped doling out tickets on July 25, when the original 2013 authorization expired.

But the city kept the cameras on to collect speed

data, and the mayor's office announced on Aug. 13 that the cameras caught 132,253 drivers speeding through school zones citywide between July 26 and Aug. 10 — and 67 percent of those were in 42 school zones across Brooklyn, according to a spokesman from

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Hizzoner skipping J'Ouvert parade

BY ALEXANDRA SIMON

Revelers who come out for this year's J'Ouvert parade can expect to celebrate among thousands of cops and hundreds of floodlights — but not Mayor DeBlasio, who said he won't be attending the early morning festivities preceding the West Indian Day Parade on Sept. 3.

"Not this year," Hizzoner said during the media sit-down. "But I plan to go at some point in my life."

DeBlasio — who said he has never attended J'Ouvert, but has gone to mas camps staged ahead of the annual event — applauded the efforts officials took last year to prevent fatal violence that has plagued past celebrations, attributing the relatively peaceful festivities to its new 6 am start time, along with security checkpoints

set up along the route and a beefed-up police presence that included more than 300 floodlights and some 3,700 officers, roughly 10 percent more than the 3,400 dispatched in 2016, when separate shooters killed two attendees.

"I think the bottom line last year is that it broadly worked. It was the change of the time, I think, and putting the checkpoints in place, and obviously the tremendous police presence," he said.

Earlier this month, local leaders including Borough President Adams said the city will bring the heightened safety measures back to this year's parade — which runs along Flatbush Avenue and onto Empire Boulevard before curving onto Nostrand Avenue, where it ends at Midwood Street — and DeBlasio said the Police Department will



PARADING: Mayor DeBlasio is a frequent attendee of the annual West Indian Day Parade, but has yet to attend the J'Ouvert festivities that precedes it — and won't be going this year either, he said.

File photo by Paul Martinka

announce a security plan, which may include even more precautions, "very soon."

"As to anything new, I'm going to leave that to the NYPD," he said. "I want to make sure all that has been perfected before we talk about it."

DeBlasio isn't the only mayor not to show face at the break-of-dawn Labor Day event — none of his predecessors have attended since it began in 1984, according to an organizer, who said he would

be more than welcome this year should he change his mind.

"I did extend an invitation to him to be our cultural ambassador, but I have not heard back yet," said Yvette Rennie, who runs J'Ouvert City International.

And although DeBlasio has yet to attend the festivities since he arrived in Brooklyn in 1992, he's been a regular presence at the West Indian Day Parade that follows J'Ouvert throughout the years.

TROLLEY

Continued from page 3

stole my campaign slogan," Trump tweeted on Aug. 21.

"That's not at all nice. No imagination!"

DeBlasio announced his beloved light-rail project back in 2016 as a way to connect transit-starved neighborhoods along New York Harbor and the East River, and real-estate firms quickly jumped on board, leading some pols and residents from neighborhoods it would serve to blast the so-called BQX as a gentrifying agent disguised as a public benefit.

Hizzoner initially hoped to start laying the connector's first tracks by next year, so that commuters could hop on as soon as 2024, but the city has yet to release a draft route for the trolley and a study on the feasibility of its tax-funded revenue model after promising to do so in 2017.

The mayor, who

wouldn't say if he's considering city money to help foot the infrastructure's bill, first spoke of the need for federal green in April, telling radio host Brian Lehrer that he was very hopeful about receiving some "particularly because of the presence of Sen. Schumer," whose daughter leads the streetcar-advocacy group Friends of the Brooklyn Queens Connector.

His on-air change in tune came days after some administration members offered conflicting outlooks on the streetcar's future, with the mayor's second in command admitting the project may crash if the much-anticipated financial research shows that new buildings alone can't subsidize its cost, and a separate City Hall rep days later walking back those doubts and reaffirming the project is still on track — a back and forth that led some to speculate the trolley may be permanently derailed.

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I happened to meet Simcha Felder in 2012 when he was running for the State Senate in the Democratic Primary and I voted for him. And then: Surprise! Surprise! He would be caucusing with the Senate Republicans. By often providing the deciding vote, he was able to block progressive legislation.

When he was running in the primary, did he not know that he would effectively be switching parties? Was he as surprised as I was when he did so? Would an honest person have withheld this information?

He has since run unopposed two more times. No one had the guts to run against him. Until now.

Blake Morris, whom I've known for years, stepped up this year to finally provide Felder with some opposition. Unlike Felder, Blake Morris is a real Democrat. He will not betray your trust.

To find out more about this important election, which could determine which party controls the State Senate, google "Blake Morris" and "Simcha Felder."

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Spike Lee, borough, honor Michael Jackson at block party



BY ANTHONY ROTUNNO
This party was fit for a king!

Hundreds of Michael Jackson fans danced the day away in Bedford-Stuyvesant on Saturday at a block party where celebrants paid homage to the King of Pop's singular sound — and style — according to one eye-catching attendee.

"An original is worth more than a copy, you have

to be yourself, that's what Michael did," said Lam "Legend Already Made" Sanchez, who stepped out in a red top hat, Victorian collar, and chartreuse jacket. "A lot of my style has to do with Michael, whom I watched as a kid."

Sanchez, who came out with his older brother, Jed "Walkaway Smiling" Sanchez, and girlfriend, Darcy "D3" Dawson, joined hundreds of revelers who

packed the pavement on Stuyvesant Avenue between Lexington Avenue and Quincy Street for the eighth-annual Brooklyn Loves Michael Jackson block party hosted by borough-bred filmmaker Spike Lee.

The dapperly dressed 26-year-old, who described his look as "chevalier," traveled all the way from his home in Texas to attend the event for a third time after

first going in 2016, when he missed a flight to make the bash — a last-minute decision that led to a meeting with Lee, a longtime idol, who has warmly welcomed him back ever since, Sanchez said.

"I ended up meeting Spike that year, in 2016," he said. "Now he points me out and brings me on stage every year. It's such a dream come true."

Local disc jockey DJ Spinna manned the turntables as Lee and other entertainers — including singer Erykah Badu, who with the host led a special tribute to the recently deceased Aretha Franklin — pumped up the spectators, some of whom joined him to bust a move on stage like Sanchez, while others broke it down on the street, which the city in 2015 co-named "Do The Right Thing Way" after the director's movie, which he filmed on that block of Stuyvesant Avenue.

Another fan who dressed to impress at the party, held days before Jackson's Aug.

DIDN'T STOP 'TIL YOU GET ENOUGH: (Above) A pint-sized Michael Jackson fan channeled the late artist at Spike Lee's annual block party honoring the musician in Bedford-Stuyvesant on Saturday. (Center) From left, Jed Sanchez, Lam Sanchez, and Darcy Dawson showed off their out-of-this-world outfits. (Left) Block-party host Spike Lee, left, and a co-host got the crowd on its feet.

Photos by Trey Pentecost

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ARENA

Continued from page 2

plained that the city was not being transparent enough with community members about its plans. When he asked the crowd to raise their hands if they had not been aware that the city had been given permission to demolish the center in 2009, almost everyone in the standing-room-only au-

dience raised their hand.

The Abe Stark Sports Center opened in 1970 and its ice rink has been used by local hockey teams and figure skaters ever since, and draws large crowds of amateur skaters when it is open to the public on weekends.

A 2009 rezoning opened the facility and the surrounding area up to redevelopment, the building of a new amusement park,

and still-living director Tim Burton, a pair he said never worked together in life, but "maybe could in the afterlife" — hailed the annual party as a reminder of the legendary performer's artistry and influence, which he said prevails over popular music nearly 10 years after he died in 2009.

"You can change the rules of the game, but nobody will beat the talent that Michael had," he said. "That is hard to beat, and is still considered the best."

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And private companies running facilities on public land is nothing new. Along with Aviator, which has been in business for more than a decade, Privately run Luna Park in Coney Island sits on city-owned parkland, along with the historic Cyclone and MCU Park, the baseball stadium that is home to the Brooklyn Cyclones.



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Continued from page 1

from two pickups a week down to one in Bay Ridge to focus on the area's need for bulk pickups, which cannot be done while collecting organics in dual-bin trucks that have separate, smaller compartments for trash and scraps.

"You can't put large bulk items in a dual-bin truck. This is the first or second — depending on the month — district in the city in terms of bulk disposal," said Henry Ehrhardt, a spokesman for the department. "You guys are up at the plateau, that's a huge problem when you've got dual-bin trucks."

But residents complained that their food-waste containers reek after sitting out in the sun for a week. Ridgite Joe Cacciola suggested that the department pick up organics more frequently during the sum-

mer months, but sanitation officials said that would be unrealistic.

"You just can't do a seasonal pick up like that," said department spokesman Ignazio Terranova. "You got to take into consideration the trucks that are going to be out there, the logistics in terms of the routes. You just can't turn this on and off like a light switch."

Cacciola said he understands the issues a seasonal pickup schedule would present, but that the reeking trash he had to deal with was no joke.

"Of course it's difficult, but it's also really difficult to have all that food sitting around for a week," he said.

Last year, Ridgites raised a ruckus over the lack of bulk pickups, which left junk at the curb for weeks at a time.

Staffers for Councilman Justin Brannan (D-Bay Ridge) said his office supported anything that helped speed up bulk pickups in

the district.

"One of the things we noticed earlier in the year when we took office was an increase in complaints about beds, furniture and bulk items out on the streets for longer periods of time," said Chris McCreight, Brannan's chief of staff. "We understand why they need to make it easier for bulk pick up, which is great, we're starting to see the effects of that now."

McCreight said he believes there are things residents can do keep their food scraps from stinking up the neighborhood, even with the reduced collection.

"I think it can be done, I think we just need to make sure everybody knows the right days that they're supposed to put it out," McCreight said. "Once they get accustomed to that I think it's going to be good."

The organics collection program rolled out in Bay Ridge more than four years ago.

ARCH

Continued from page 1

revamping the lights that illuminate it, repaving parts of the plaza surrounding Bailey Fountain and John F. Kennedy Memorial, and some landscaping.

The restoration will be the first major work on the arch — which turns 126-years-old on Oct. 21 — since 1980. Its last comprehensive renovation came seven years after officials designated the structure a landmark in 1973, and roughly four years after the statue of Columbia — a goddess-like figure forefathers used to symbolize the United States — fell from its sculpted chariot atop the arch in 1976.

Less than a decade ago, locals could enter the Soldiers' and Sailors' Arch to visit the Puppet Museum housed within, but that institution moved to a new home at Brooklyn College in 2010 due to leaks inside the structure, whose observation deck permanently closed to the public years before that, according to reports that Alliance officials could not immediately be reached to confirm.

Kirschner couldn't give a timeline for the Grand Army Plaza project, but said



TOP JOB: Locals will be able to climb to the observation deck of the Soldiers and Sailors Arch after the renovation. File photo by Stefano Giovannini

the Alliance will host a community meeting about it in the fall before kicking off the design process and announcing a schedule for the repairs.

And the plaza isn't the only place getting a face-lift in the area — Brooklyn Council members also allotted \$1 million in taxpayer funds to the ongoing makeover of Prospect Park's overgrown Rose Garden, outside of which, Alliance leaders plan to install one of two new Flatbush Avenue entrances going in as part of another \$5.6-million upgrade.

BQE

Continued from page 3

riders who cross the East River daily that includes more service on other trains, more ferries, new

bike paths, and other options — there's no backup highway for drivers to use when sections of the expressway are closed for its repair, DeBlasio said.

"We can do a lot with buses, ferries, and bikes

to compensate for only 15 months," he said. "When it comes time to fix the BQE, we don't have perfect alternatives, and we will have to start the process of announcing what the plans look like soon."

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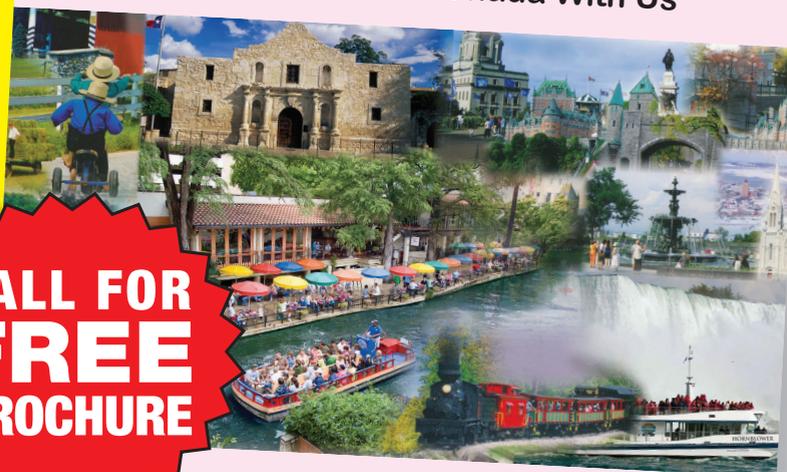


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